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Chuvash language

Chuvash /ˈtʃuːvɑːʃ/[3] (Чӑвашла, translit. *Căvašla*, *Çovaşla*; IPA: [tɕəʋaʂˈla])[4] is a Turkic language spoken in European Russia, primarily in the Chuvash Republic and adjacent areas. It is the only surviving member of the Oghur branch of Turkic languages. Because of this, Chuvash has diverged considerably from the other Turkic languages, which are mutually intelligible to a greater or lesser extent with each other but not with Chuvash.

The writing system for the Chuvash language is based on the Cyrillic script, employing all of the letters used in the Russian alphabet and adding four letters of its own: Ӑ, Ӗ, Ç and Ӳ.

Contents

Chuvash	
Căvašla *Çovaşla*	
Чӑвашла	
Pronunciation	[tɕəʋaʂˈla]
Native to	Russia
Region	Chuvashia and adjacent areas
Ethnicity	Chuvash
Native speakers	1,042,989 (2010 census)[1]
Language family	Turkic
	▪ Oghur (Lir)
	▪ **Chuvash**
Early form	Bulgar
Writing system	Cyrillic
Official status	
Official language in	🇷🇺 Russia
	▪ 🏴 Chuvashia
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	cv (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=cv)
ISO 639-2	chv (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=92)
ISO 639-3	chv
Glottolog	chuv1255 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/chuv1255)[2]

Usage

Chuvash is the native language of the Chuvash people and an official language of Chuvashia.[5][6] It is spoken by 1,640,000 persons in Russia and another 34,000 in other countries.[7] 86% of ethnic Chuvash and 8% of the people of other ethnicities living in Chuvashia claimed knowledge of Chuvash language during the 2002 census.[8] Despite that, and although Chuvash is taught at schools and sometimes used in the media, it is considered endangered,[9][10] because Russian dominates in most spheres of life, and few children learning the language are likely to become active users.

A fairly significant production and publication of literature in Chuvash still continues. According to UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, at least 202 books translated from Chuvash were

Stamp of the Soviet Union, Chuvash people, 1933

published in other languages (mostly Russian) since ca. 1979.[11] However, as with most other languages of the former USSR, most of the translation activity took place before the dissolution of the USSR: out of the 202 translations, 170 books were published in the USSR,[12] and just 17, in the post-1991 Russia (mostly, in the 1990s).[13] A similar situation takes place with the translation of books from other languages (mostly Russian) into Chuvash (the total of 175 titles published since ca. 1979, but just 18 of them in post-1991 Russia).[14]

History

Chuvash is the most distinctive of the Turkic languages and cannot be understood by speakers of other Turkic tongues. Chuvash is classified, alongside the extinct language Bulgar, as the only remaining member of the Oghuric branch of the Turkic language family. Since the surviving literary records for the non-Chuvash members of Oghuric are scant, the exact position of Chuvash within the Oghuric family cannot be determined.

The Oghuric branch is distinguished from the rest of the Turkic family (the Common Turkic languages) by two sound changes: *r* corresponding to Common Turkic *z,* and *l* corresponding to Common Turkic *ş*.[15]

Chuvash is so divergent from the main body of Turkic languages that scholars formerly considered Chuvash to be a Turkified Finno-Ugric (Uralic language).[16] However, the first scientific fieldwork description of Chuvash, by August Ahlqvist in 1856, allowed researchers to establish its proper affiliation.[17]

Writing systems

Current

А а	Ă ă	Б б	В в	Г г	Д д	Е е	Ё ё
Ĕ ĕ	Ж ж	З з	И и	Й й	К к	Л л	М м
Н н	О о	П п	Р р	С с	Ç ç	Т т	У у
Ÿ ÿ	Ф ф	Х х	Ц ц	Ч ч	Ш ш	Щ щ	Ъ ъ
Ы ы	Ь ь	Э э	Ю ю	Я я			

	Name	IPA	Latin script (CVLat and Turkish-Based)[18]	Notes
А а	а	/a/~/ɑ/	a	
Ӑ ӑ	ӑ	/ə/, /ɒ/	ӑ/o	a'
Б б	бӑ	/b/	b	only in loanwords from Russian
В в	вӑ	/ʊ/~/w/, /v/ (in non-chuvash loanwords)	v	
Г г	гӑ	/g/	g	only in loanwords from Russian
Д д	дӑ	/d/	d	only in loanwords from Russian
Е е	е	/ɛ/	e, je/ye	
Ё ё	ё	/jo/ or /ʲo/	jo/yo	only in loanwords from Russian
Ӗ ӗ	ӗ	/ə/ (ə~ø)	ӗ/ö	e'
Ж ж	жӑ	/ʐ/	ž/j	only in loanwords from Russian
З з	зӑ	/z/	z	only in loanwords from Russian
И и	и	/i/	i/İ i	
Й й	йӑ	/j/	j/y	
К к	кӑ	/k/, /kʲ/ (c), /ɡ̊ʲ/ (gʲ, ɟ)	k	
Л л	лӑ	/l/~/ɫ/, /lʲ/ (ʎ)	l, lĭ/l'	l'
М м	мӑ	/m/	m	
Н н	нӑ	/n/, /nʲ/ (ɲ)	n, nĭ/n'	n'
О о	о	/o/	o	only in loanwords from Russian
П п	пӑ	/p/, /p̬/ (b)	p	
Р р	рӑ	/r/~/ɾ/	r	r'
С с	сӑ	/s/, /s̬/ (z)	s	
Ҫ ҫ	ҫӑ	/ɕ/, /ɕ̬/ (ʑ)	ş/c	s'
Т т	тӑ	/t/, /tʲ/, /t̬ʲ/ (dʲ), /t̬/ (d)	t, tĭ/t'	
У у	у	/u/, /u̥/ (o)	u	
Ӳ ӳ	ӳ	/y/	ü	u'
Ф ф	фӑ	/f/, /f̬/ (v)	f	only in loanwords from Russian
Х х	хӑ	/χ/, /χʲ/, /χ̃/ (ɣ), /χ̃ʲ/	h/x	

		(ɣʲ)		
Ц ц	цă	/ts/, /tʂ/ (dz)	ts	only in loanwords from Russian
Ч ч	чă	/tɕ/, /tɕ/ (dʑ)	c/ç	
Ш ш	шă	/ʂ/, /ʂ/ (z)	š/ş	
Щ щ	щă	/ɕ:/ /ɕt͡ɕ/	šc/şç	only in loanwords from Russian
Ъ ъ	хытăлăх палли	–		only in loanwords from Russian. Placed after a consonant, acts as a "silent back vowel"; puts a distinct /j/ sound in front of the following iotified: Е, Ё, Ю, Я vowels with no palatalization of the preceding consonant
Ы ы	ы	/ɯ/	y/ı	only in beginning of words, 1-2 letters
Ь ь	çемçелĕх палли	/ʲ/	ĭ/'	Placed after a consonant, acts as a "silent front vowel", slightly palatalizes the preceding consonant
Э э	э	/e/	e	only first letter
Ю ю	ю	/ju/ or /ʲu/	ju/yu	
Я я	я	/ja/ or /ʲa/	ja/ya	

1873–1938

The modern Chuvash alphabet was devised in 1873 by school inspector Ivan Yakovlevich Yakovlev.[19]

а е ы и/i у ÿ ă ĕ й в к л Љ м н Њ п р ŕ с ç т т̆ ҕ х ш

In 1938, the alphabet underwent significant modification which brought it to its current form.

Previous systems

The most ancient writing system, known as the Old Turkic alphabet, disappeared after the Volga Bulgars converted to Islam. Later, the Arabic script was adopted. After the Mongol invasion, writing degraded. After Peter the Great's reforms Chuvash elites disappeared, blacksmiths and some other crafts were prohibited for non-Russian nations, the Chuvash were educated in Russian, while writing in runes recurred with simple folks.[20][21]

Phonology

Consonants

The consonants are the following (the corresponding Cyrillic letters are in brackets): The stops, sibilants and affricates are voiceless and fortes but become lenes (sounding similar to voiced) in intervocalic position and after liquids, nasals and semi-vowels. Аннепе sounds like *annebe*, but кушакпа sounds like *kuzhakpa*. However, geminate consonants do not undergo this lenition. Furthermore, the voiced consonants occurring in Russian are used in modern Russian-language loans. Consonants also become palatalized before and after front vowels.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Alveolo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Uvular
Stop	п /p/		т /t/				к /k/	
Affricate					ч /tɕ/			
Fricative			с /s/	ш /ʂ/	ҫ /ɕ/			х /χ/
Nasal	м /m/		н /n/					
Approximant		в /ʋ/	л /l/			й /j/		
Trill			р /r/					

Vowels

According to Krueger (1961), the Chuvash vowel system is as follows (the precise IPA symbols are chosen based on his description since he uses a different transcription).
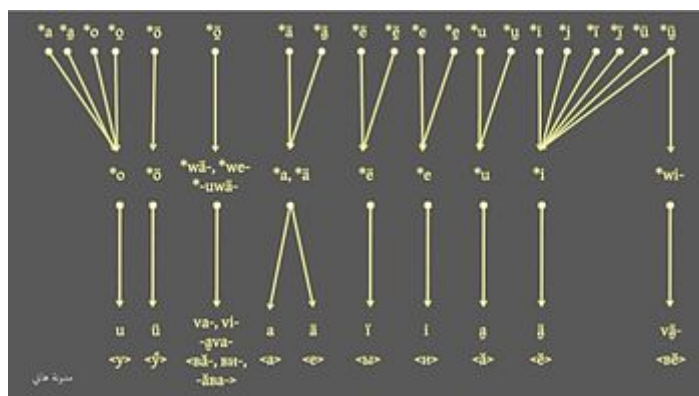
A possible scheme for the diachronic development of Chuvash vowels (note that not all the sounds with an asterisk are necessarily separate phonemes).

	Front		Back	
	Unrounded	**Rounded**	**Unrounded**	**Rounded**
High	i ⟨и⟩	y ⟨ӳ⟩	ɯ ⟨ы⟩	u ⟨у⟩
Low	e ⟨e⟩	ø̆ ⟨ĕ⟩	a ⟨a⟩	ŏ ⟨ă⟩

András Róna-Tas (1997)[22] provides a somewhat different description, also with a partly idiosyncratic transcription. The following table is based on his version, with additional information from Petrov (2001). Again, the IPA symbols are not directly taken from the works so they could be inaccurate.

	Front		Back	
	Unrounded	**Rounded**	**Unrounded**	**Rounded**
High	i ⟨и⟩	y ⟨ӳ⟩	ɯ ⟨ы⟩	u ⟨у⟩
Close-mid	ĕ ⟨ĕ⟩		ɤ̆ ⟨ă⟩	
Open-mid	ɛ ⟨e⟩			
Low			a ⟨a⟩	

The vowels ă and ĕ are described as reduced, thereby differing in quantity from the rest. In unstressed positions, they often resemble a schwa or tend to be dropped altogether in fast speech. At times, especially when stressed, they may be somewhat rounded and sound similar to /o/ and /ø/.

Additionally, ɔ (o) occurs in loanwords from Russian where the syllable is unstressed in Russian.

Word accent

The usual rule given in grammars of Chuvash is that the last full (non-reduced) vowel of the word is stressed; if there are no full vowels, the first vowel is stressed.[23] Reduced vowels that precede or follow a stressed full vowel are extremely short and non-prominent. One scholar, Dobrovolsky, however, hypothesises that there is in fact no stress in disyllabic words in which both vowels are reduced.[24]

Dialects

There are two dialects of Chuvash:

- **Viryal**, or **Upper** (which has both *o* and *u*), and
- **Anatri**, or **Lower** (which has *u* for both *o* and *u*: up. totă "full", tută "taste" – lo. tută "full, taste").

The literary language is based on both the Lower and Upper dialects. Both Tatar and the neighbouring Uralic languages such as Mari have influenced the Chuvash language, as have Russian, Mongolian, Arabic and Persian, which have all added many words to the Chuvash lexicon.

Morphology

As characteristic of all Turkic languages, Chuvash is an agglutinative language and as such, has an abundance of suffixes but no native prefixes or prepositions, apart from the partly reduplicative intensive prefix, such as in: шурă - *white*, шап-шурă - *snow-white*, хура - *black*, хуп-хура - *jet black*, такăр - *flat*, так-такăр - *absolutely flat*, тулли - *full*, тăп-тулли - *chock full* (compare to Turkish beyaz - *white*, bem-beyaz *snow-white*, kara - *black*, kap-kara - *jet black*, düz - *flat*, dümdüz - *absolutely flat*, dolu - *full*, dopdolu - *chock full*). One word can have many suffixes, which can also be used to create new words like creating a verb from a noun or a noun from a verbal root. See Vocabulary below. It can also indicate the grammatical function of the word.

Nouns and adjectives

Chuvash nouns can take endings indicating the person of a possessor. They can take case-endings. There are six noun cases in the Chuvash declension system:

Grammatical case:

- Nominative -
- Possessive (of), after consonants: -ăн/-ĕн, after vowels: -н according to the vowel harmony
- Dative-Accusative (for), after consonants: -а/-е, after vowels: -на/-не according to the vowel harmony
- Locative (in, on), formed by adding -ра/-ре, -та/-те according to the vowel harmony
- Ablative (from), formed by adding -ран/-рен, -тан/-тен according to the vowel harmony
- Instrumental (with), formed by adding -па(лан)/-пе(лен) according to the vowel harmony
- Abessive (without), formed by adding -сăр/-сĕр according to the vowel harmony
- Causative, formed by adding -шăн/-шĕн according to the vowel harmony

Plural:

- Nominative: -сем
- Possessive: -сен
- Dative-Accusative: -сене
- Locative: -сенче
- Ablative: -сенчен
- Instrumental: -семпе
- Abessive: -семсĕр
- Causative: -семшĕн

Also:

- Terminative–antessive (to), formed by adding -(ч)чен
- relic of distributive, formed by adding -серен: кунсерен "daily, every day", килсерен "per house", килмессерен "every time one comes"
- Semblative (as), formed by adding пек to pronouns in genitive or objective case (ман **пек** "like me", сан **пек** "like you", ун **пек** "like him, that way", пирĕн **пек** "like us", сирĕн **пек** "like you all", хам **пек** "like myself", хăвăн **пек** "like yourself", кун **пек** "like this"); adding -ла, -ле to nouns (этемле "humanlike", ленинла "like Lenin")
- Postfix: ха (ha)

Adjective:

- Comparative: -рах/-рех

Verb:

- Infinitive: -ма(лла|лли|лăх)/-ме(лле|лли|лĕх), negative postfix мар
- Gerund (-ing): positive -ни, negative -манни/-менни
- Conditional mood if: -са(сă)н/-се(сĕ)н, negative -маса(сă)н/-месе(сĕ)н, even if: -са(сă)н та/-се(сĕ)н те, negative -маса(сă)н та/-месе(сĕ)н те

Taking кун (day) as an example:

Noun case	Chuvash	English
Nominative	кун	day, or the day
Possessive	кунăн	of the day
Dative-Accusative	куна	to the day
Locative	кунта	in the day
Ablative	кунтан	of the day, or from the day
Instrumental	кунпа	with the day

Possession is expressed by means of constructions based on verbs meaning "to exist" and "not to exist" ("пур" and "çук"). For example, to say, "My cat had no shoes":

кушак + -ăн ура атă(и) + -сем çук + -ччĕ
(кушакăн ура аттисем çукччĕ)

which literally translates as "cat-mine-of foot-cover(of)-plural-his non-existent-was."

Verbs

Chuvash verbs exhibit person and can be made negative or impotential; they can also be made potential. Finally, Chuvash verbs exhibit various distinctions of tense mood, and aspect: a verb can be progressive, necessitative, aorist, future, inferential, present, past, conditional, imperative or optative.

Chuvash	English
кил-	(to) come
килме-	not (to) come
килейме-	not (to) be able to come
килеймен	She (or he) was apparently unable to come.
килеймерĕ	She had not been able to come.
килеймерĕр	You (plural) had not been able to come.
килеймерĕр-и?	Have you (plural) not been able to come?

Vowel harmony

Vowel harmony is the principle by which a native Chuvash word generally incorporates either exclusively back or hard vowels (а, ă, у, ы) and exclusively front or soft vowels (е, ĕ, ÿ, и). As such, a notation for a Chuvash suffix such as -тен means either -тан or -тен, whichever promotes vowel harmony; a notation such as -тпăр means either -тпăр, -тпĕр, again with vowel harmony constituting the deciding factor.

Chuvash has two classes of vowels: *front* and *back* (see the table above). Vowel harmony states that words may not contain both front and back vowels. Therefore, most grammatical suffixes come in front and back forms, e.g. Шупашкар**та** "in Cheboksary" but кил**те** "at home".

Two vowels cannot occur in succession.

Exceptions

Compound words are considered separate words with respect to vowel harmony: vowels do not have to harmonize between members of the compound (so forms like сĕтел|пукан "furniture" are permissible). In addition, vowel harmony does not apply for loanwords and some invariant suffixes (such as -ĕ); there are also a few native Chuvash words that do not follow the rule (such as анне "mother"). In such words suffixes harmonize with the final vowel; thus Анне**пе** "with the mother".

Word order

Word order in Chuvash is generally subject–object–verb.

Chuvash numbers

- 1 – пĕрре *pĕrre*, пĕр *pĕr*

- 2 – иккĕ *ikkĕ*, икĕ *ikĕ*, ик *ik*
- 3 – виҫҫĕ *vişşĕ*, виҫĕ *vişĕ*, виҫ *viş*
- 4 – тăваттă *tăvattă*, тăватă *tăvată*, тăват *tăvat*
- 5 – пиллĕк *pillĕk*, пилĕк *pilĕk*
- 6 – улттă *ulttă* IPA: [ˈulʈːə], ултă *ultă* IPA: [ˈulʈə], улт *ult* IPA: [ult]/IPA: [ulʈ]
- 7 – ҫиччĕ *şiccĕ* IPA: [ˈɕitɕːə], ҫичĕ *şicĕ* IPA: [ˈɕitɕə], ҫич *şic* IPA: [ˈɕitɕ]
- 8 – саккăр *sakkăr* IPA: [ˈsakːər], сакăр *sakăr* IPA: [ˈsaḳər]
- 9 – тăххăр *tăhhăr*, тăхăр *tăhăr*
- 10 – вуннă *vunnă*, вун *vun*
- 11 – вун пĕр *vun pĕr*
- 12 – вун иккĕ *vun ikkĕ*, вун икĕ *vun ikĕ*, вун ик *vun ik*
- 13 – вун виҫҫĕ *vun vişşĕ*, вун виҫĕ *vun vişĕ*, вун виҫ *vun viş*
- 14 – вун тăваттă *vun tăvattă*, вун тăватă *vun tăvată*, вун тăват *vun tăvat*
- 15 – вун пиллĕк *vun pillĕk*, вун пилĕк *vun pilĕk*
- 16 – вун улттă *vun ulttă*, вунултă *vun ultă*, вун улт *vun ult*
- 17 – вун ҫиччĕ *vun şiccĕ*, вун ҫичĕ *vun şicĕ*
- 18 – вун саккăр *vun sakkăr*, вун сакăр *vun sakăr*
- 19 – вун тăххăр *vun tăhhăr*, вун тăхăр *vun tăhăr*
- 20 – ҫирĕм *şirĕm*
- 30 – вăтăр *vătăr*
- 40 – хĕрĕх *hĕrĕh*
- 50 – аллă *allă*, алă *ală*, ал *al*
- 60 – утмăл *utmăl*
- 70 – ҫитмĕл *şitmĕl*
- 80 – сакăрвуннă *sakărvunnă*, сакăрвун *sakărvun*
- 90 – тăхăрвуннă *tăhărvunnă*, тăхăрвун *tăhărvun*
- 100 – ҫĕр *şĕr*
- 1000 – пин *pin*
- 834236 - сакăр ҫĕр вăтăр тăватă пин те ик ҫĕр вăтăр улттă *sakăr şĕr vătăr tăvată pin te ik şĕr vătăr ulttă* IPA: [ˌsakərɕərʋəʈərʈəʋaʈə↗pinʲʈeˈikɕərʋəʈər↘ultːəll], сакăр ҫĕр вăтăр тăватă пин те ик ҫĕр вăтăр ултă *sakăr şĕr vătăr tăvată pin te ik şĕr vătăr ultă*

See also

- Chuvash literature
- Bulgar language
- Cyrillic script
- Oghur languages
- Turkic Avar language
- Turkic languages

- Ivan Yakovlev

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External links

- Скоро чувашский язык останется «какой-то культурной традицией» (http://chuvash.org/blogs/comments/2783.html)

- Chuvash–Russian On-Line Dictionary (http://samah.chv.su/cgi-bin/s.cgi)
- Chuvash English On-Line Dictionary (http://en.chuvash.org/e/436875766173682d456e676c69 73682044696374696f6e617279)
- Chuvash People's Website (http://en.chuvash.org) (in English), also available in Chuvash, Esperanto and Russian
- *Nutshell Chuvash*, by András Róna-Tas (https://web.archive.org/web/20110807192758/http://w ww2.lingfil.uu.se/afro/turkiskasprak/IP2007/NUTSHELLCHUVASH.pdf)
- *Chuvash people and language* by Éva Kincses Nagy, Istanbul Erasmus IP 1- 13. 2. 2007 (http s://web.archive.org/web/20080409043651/http://www.lingfil.uu.se/afro/turkiskasprak/IP2007/Ki ncses.pdf)
- *Chuvash manual online* (http://en.chuvash.org/e/43687576617368206d616e75616c)
- Виталий Станьял: На чувашском конь еще не валялся... (http://chuvash.org/content%2F30 37-На%20чувашском%20конь%20еще%20не%20валялся....html)
- Виталий Станьял: Решение Совета Аксакалов ЧНК (http://chuvash.org/content%2F3038-Чă ваш%20ваттисен%20тĕп%20канашĕн%20йышăнăвĕ.html)
- Прощай, исчезающий чувашский язык? (https://chuvash.org/content/3156-Прощай%2C%20 исчезающий%20чувашский%20язык%3F.html)
- Чăваш чĕлхине Страсбургра хӳтĕлĕç (https://chuvash.org/news/17092.html)
- Тутарстанра чĕлхе пирки сăмахларĕç (https://chuvash.org/news/17162.html)
- Владимир Болгарский. Об угрозе развала страны в будущем, о съезде ЧНК, и об обращении к президенту (https://chuvash.org/content/3180-Об%20угрозе%20развала%20с траны%20в%20будущем%2C%20о%20съезде%20ЧНК%2C%20и%20об%20обращении% 20к%20президенту.html)
- Why don't Chuvash people speak Chuvash? (https://web.archive.org/web/20181026182747/htt ps://www.idelreal.org/a/27902182.html)
- "As it is in the Chuvash Republic the Chuvash are not needed?!" (https://www.idelreal.org/a/29 546401.html)